



For immediate release

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Public urged to avoid “super spreader” events

Helena – Lewis and Clark Public Health urges the public to avoid attending large gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19. “Super Spreader” events are those where a large group of people gathers and someone carrying an infectious disease can easily spread it to many others. COVID-19 is highly contagious and when proper protocols are not followed, these events have the potential to cause a large outbreak.

Many “super-spreader” events are occurring and gatherings and inter-jurisdictional travel are the leading causes of cases in Montana right now.

“So far Lewis and Clark County has had a relatively low number of cases, but we are slowly seeing that change,” said Lewis and Clark Public Health Officer Drenda Niemann. “We are seeing these events occurring and we are really concerned about the potential for spread this weekend and moving forward. Now is not the time to be having these events.”

Governor Bullock’s Phase 2 “Reopening the Big Sky” directive allows for gathering of less than 50 people and says gatherings of over 50 people may occur with adequate and maintained social distancing. The directive states, “If you are planning an event with more than 50 people you should consult with your local public health office on a plan to implement adequate social distancing.”

Reopening and staying open relies on both community and personal responsibility. It is important to practice what has been learned over the last few months, such as physical distancing and wearing a face mask to protect ourselves and others. Phase 2 relies on LCPH being able to limit and contain disease through the identification and isolation of cases, contact tracing, and the quarantine of close contacts. Large events provide an opportunity for things to get out of control, quickly. This situation could result in LCPH losing its ability to contain disease.

Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH) has [online guidance](#) and a [request form](#) on the LCPH webpage for event organizers, and there are currently 33 event requests in the queue. Event organizers are asked to submit a plan to LCPH at least 10 days in advance of an event.

However, LCPH is facing several challenges. Event organizers submit a plan and work with LCPH, but then the plan doesn’t work operationally. People don’t follow the rules, wear masks and/or physical distance. In other instances, event planners submit a plan but do not follow LCPH recommendations and host an event anyway. The third issue LCPH sees is complete disregard to the Governor’s directive and organizers having events without working with LCPH or having a plan.

“Just because an event is occurring, doesn’t mean it’s safe,” said LCPH Disease Control and Prevention Division Administrator Eric Merchant. “COVID-19 may not get an event invitation, but it will be an event crasher.”

While everyone is encouraged to avoid these large gatherings, those at high risk for complications from COVID-19, like those over age 65 and those with chronic medical conditions should take extra precautions to avoid these events. Additionally, anyone exhibiting symptoms or not feeling well should stay home.

If you have questions, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900. Thank you for protecting our community from COVID-19!

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